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OPINION | LETTERS

Anti-Semitism: Which Jews Face It and How to Respond?

‘You may count me among the Jews who are not terrified.’

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The Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, Jan. 16.

PHOTO: BRANDON WADE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Regarding Mark Oppenheimer’s “The Growing Risk for Jews Who Show Their Jewishness” (Review, Jan. 22): While observant Jews may make easier targets for anti-Semites, it is misguided to believe that Jews can evade anti-Jewish bias by concealing their Jewish identities. This is the wishful thinking of assimilationists who find little of value in their Judaism. They have been unpleasantly surprised throughout history to be made aware of their Jewishness by anti-Semites who view them differently than they view themselves.

It behooves Mr. Oppenheimer to take a deeper look to understand why competing ideologies and cultures striving for dominance have come and gone throughout history, while Torah Judaism hasn’t merely survived for thousands of years, but, without seeking to impose its beliefs on others, has profoundly influenced other cultures and is thriving today.

Michael Schneider

Monsey, N.Y.

I take exception to the statement that “Jews who go to synagogue are terrified of anti-

Semitism right now.” Not all Jews live in blue states that have limited Second Amendment rights. Nor do we all frequent non-Orthodox synagogues that are by and large liberal and opposed to the carrying of firearms. My Orthodox synagogue has a security team manned by shul members who have been trained by a former Army Ranger, a current police department SWAT officer and a former Israeli Shin Bet agent. I regularly undergo firearms practice. At the range, prior to squeezing the trigger, I think of my grandparents who were gassed in Treblinka, and I vow “never again.” You may count me among the Jews who are not terrified.

Richard H. Rolnick

Houston

Mr. Oppenheimer’s essay describes Jewish Community Centers as “struggling,” when the reality couldn’t be more different. Before the pandemic, the more than 170 JCCs across the U.S. and Canada welcomed more than 1.5 million people each week, over one million of them Jews. That non-Jews also join is not a sign of dependence. It indicates a wide recognition of the strength of JCC programs and the warm welcome provided to all.

The America Mr. Oppenheimer describes, in which Jews have achieved largely unfettered access to nearly every opportunity, ignores rising levels of division and strife. One in 4 U.S. Jews report experiencing anti-Semitism in the past year, often beyond the walls of Jewish communal settings. Far from avoiding such places, Jews seek them out in growing numbers, confident they will be safe, owing to a considered commitment to security. Instances of anti-Semitism are on the rise, but to suggest such acts befall only, or even disproportionately, on the Jewishly observant is wrong.

Doron Krakow

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Mr. Oppenheimer’s essay brings us to the age-old “blame the victim” thinking.

Dorothea Dorenz

Berkeley, Calif.

As a 63-year-old, non-strictly observant American Jew, I don’t recall a time when I sensed as much anti-Semitism in the U.S. as now. The Charlottesville thugs chanting “Jews shall not replace us” and the fact that any expression of support for Israel on many college campuses will lead to ostracism, “cancellation” or worse are only two examples of a scourge that affects us all and me personally.

Prof. Joel E. Fishman

University of Miami School of Medicine

Miami

It is appalling that going to synagogue services now requires security precautions. Mr. Oppenheimer refers to those who attend as “having decided that praying with fellow Jews is worth the risk of dying with them.” That sounds too much like surrender. They should expect to be protected, not consigned to martyrdom.

Alan M. Schwartz

Teaneck, N.J.

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